

Noisy Toys

The noise levels produced by toys are not closely regulated. Therefore, toys need to be checked to ensure that they are not too loud. In the past, the most prominent noisy toys were cap guns, toy drums, and squeaky rubber toys. Now a wide variety of noise-producing electronic toys are marketed to young children. A few common culprits for excessively loud noise include toy cell phones, musical instruments, dolls that talk, mini ambulances with sirens, toy power tools, and talking storybooks.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) describes the dangers of noisy toys on their website (www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/noisy_toys.htm). ASHA points out that some toys are as loud as lawnmowers. Employees exposed to the same noise level would be required to wear earplugs or earmuffs. ASHA encourages parents to check toys for excessive noise before they are purchased, just like you would inspect a toy for small parts that may become a choking hazard.

Each December, Minnesota's Sight & Hearing Association reports on toys that are too loud. The closer a toy is to the child's ear, the louder and more dangerous it becomes. Since children may lay their head on toys or hold them close to their ears, Sight & Hearing measures the noise levels produced by toys from 0 inches away and from 12 inches away. You can find reports of their past findings at : http://www.sightandhearing.org/news/healthissue/index_archive.asp. The Sight & Hearing Association encourages the public to report loud toys either to their agency or to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Of course, noise-producing toys can be fun and educational. Toys that produce sound can help motivate young children to discover and explore cause and affect relationships. Parents and childcare providers should check toys, however, to ensure that they are not too loud. One should hold each toy directly to your ear, activate the sound, and listen. If a toy seems too loud, try covering the speaker with tape to muffle the sound. As a last resort, remove the batteries from the toy so that your child can enjoy the toy safely.